

WASHINGTON POST
24 November 1986

Shultz's Aloofness Criticized

Backing for President, Candor Are Questioned

By David B. Ottaway and Walter Pincus
Washington Post Staff Writers

Secretary of State George P. Shultz, who has carefully sought to distance himself from the White House decision to send arms to Iran, was sharply criticized yesterday for not supporting President Reagan publicly in a time of crisis for his administration.

At the same time, evidence continues to mount that Shultz knew more about arms shipments this year to Iran than he has acknowledged, but decided not to fight what he knew was the president's strong desire to attempt to gain release of American hostages in Lebanon, even by offering arms.

A top State Department official said that Shultz had initially fought the decision, but that after the president made up his mind, Shultz decided not to use up his credit with Reagan by raising the issue again. At the same time, he allowed his top aides to remain in the dark.

In an unusually direct blast against Shultz, Sen. Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.), to be minority leader in the new Congress, said he was having difficulty supporting Reagan's decision because "it's fairly difficult when the secretary of state is not doing anything."

"I mean, if the secretary of state was in on the briefings . . . it's pretty hard for some of us who have not been, and are Republican leaders, to get out in front when those in the president's Cabinet are sort of hiding from the issue," he said on CBS News' "Face the Nation."

Sen. Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.) said he was "disappointed" with Shultz's behavior in

light of former national security adviser Robert C. McFarlane's assertion Thursday that Shultz had been informed "repeatedly and often" about the operation.

"I've always been pretty impressed with George Shultz, his candor, his integrity and his knowledge of foreign affairs," Bumpers said. "But to say that he only got fragmentary evidence when Bud McFarlane was saying he was briefed time and again and kept up to speed on it, that's a real problem. It would be if I were a president."

Dole, nodding his head in agreement, added, "It creates a real problem for a lot of us who trust the president and want to see the president out of this mess."

Bumpers indicated that he thought Shultz, if he was so strongly against the decision initially, should have resigned, as did Cyrus R. Vance, President Jimmy Carter's secretary of state, in April 1980 over Carter's decision to attempt a military rescue of the 52 American hostages being held in Tehran.

Former secretary of state Henry A. Kissinger chastised Shultz yesterday for not supporting Reagan in what he called the administration's "first real crisis" in six years, saying "it is the duty of the secretary of state to get along with the president, not of the president to get along with the secretary of state."

"I am struck by the fact that in the middle of a crisis the president is all alone on the parapet and almost none of his close associates are supporting not only the tactics . . . but not even the general philosophy of what he has attempted to do," he said.

Kissinger, who was both national security adviser and secretary of state under President Richard M. Nixon, said on NBC News' "Meet the Press" that he thought it was "imperative that the daylight between the president and secretary of state be closed."

Reagan's wife, Nancy, also let it be known last week that she was upset by Shultz's oblique public criticism of the president's decision and his failure to support him more openly over the past three weeks.

Shultz's behavior throughout the last three weeks of disclosures about the administration's secret shipment of arms has been ambiguous. He has sought to avoid becoming embroiled in the controversy swirling about the president's decision and has attempted to portray himself as largely uninformed about the secret operation.

For example, he has said his information about the "operational aspects" of the arms shipments was only "fragmentary at best" and that he was unaware of what had led to

the release in Beirut of American hostage David P. Jacobsen early this month.

On the other hand, he has made a series of statements indicating his strong disagreement with Reagan's decision, and has done relatively little to quell press speculation that he might resign in protest.

Shultz first let it be known he stood in sharp disagreement with the decision in comments made to reporters on his plane Nov. 7 as he flew back from a meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. "I don't want to get down into this business, but I will say that I think the policy of not negotiating for hostages is the right policy."

Shultz also took indirect issue with the president's assessment that Iran's role in terrorism was decreasing. In his speech to the nation Nov. 13, Reagan sought to justify his decision to send Iran arms partly by saying there was "no evidence of Iranian government complicity in acts of terrorism against the United States."

But Shultz remarked on "Face the Nation" last Sunday that "Iran has and continues to pursue a policy of terrorism" and that the United States had to be worried about it, "whether directed against us or directed against anybody else."

Meanwhile, evidence continues to mount that Shultz and his top aides knew, or discovered independently, that the administration was still arranging for arms shipments to Tehran.

McFarlane said Thursday that he had told Shultz "repeatedly and often about every item that went on in this enterprise" and that he was "somewhat surprised" by the secretary's saying, or implying, that he did not know what was going on.

Shultz said Friday he had participated in two "full-scale discussions" about the secret Iranian operation. An aide said later he was referring to discussions on Dec. 6, 1985, and last Jan. 7.

Continued

The first of those meetings took place when McFarlane was in London conferring with Israeli officials and an Iranian arms dealer about new arms shipments to Iran. (Two shipments of arms had gone from Israel to Iran in September 1985 at the time of the release of the American hostage Benjamin Weir, who was held in Lebanon by pro-Iranian extremists.)

The Dec. 6 meeting, according to State Department sources, was held after both the State and Defense departments discovered there was a proposal for the United States to follow the Israeli practice of sending arms to Iran. At the second meeting Jan. 7, Shultz, supported by Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger, thought he had prevailed and that the president had abandoned the idea.

In a secret presidential "finding" Jan. 17, however, the president reversed himself and decided to go ahead with the operation. Whether Shultz and his top aides—who normally would see such a finding—were ever informed was disputed Friday in closed testimony given by CIA officials to the Senate.

A CIA Director William J. Casey told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that all departments had concurred in the Jan. 17 finding, including the State Department, according to congressional sources.

His statement prompted Undersecretary of State Michael H. Armacost, who was attending the session to take notes for the State Department, to stand up and insist that the department had not concurred in the finding and had never seen it, the sources said.

Armacost's office refused to comment on this report.

It is not clear yet to Shultz's aides whether the secretary had personally concurred without telling them. Several White House officials have said Shultz participated in drafting the finding.

Subsequently, last April or May, several top Shultz aides learned independently that the administration was encouraging third parties to send arms and even appeared to be helping arrange for some of them to do so.

A British businessman, Roland (Tiny) Rowland, was contacted at that time by Israeli Foreign Ministry director general David Kimche and the Arab tycoon Adnan Khashoggi to ask whether he would participate in an arms shipment deal that the two men said had White House blessing, according to European sources.

Rowland checked with State Department officials who told him they knew nothing about White House approval of such arms shipments, according to these sources.

Subsequently, word of Rowland's query was brought to Shultz's attention. Shultz indicated he knew about the White House operation but refused to do anything further to oppose it, according to a State Department source.

"He wouldn't go to the mat because it was something he knew the president wanted to do," the source said. Shultz felt he had to use his credit at the White House on other issues, such as arms control, where he could have more influence, the source said.